

December 1994

THE 1897 AIRSHIPS

UFOs, then called airships, were seen in great numbers during the year 1897 in America as evidenced by the print media coverage of the events. Today, some researchers dismiss the 1897 sightings as myths, lies, fables, false reports, and/or sensationalism. Nevertheless, a review of the actual newspaper coverage of the era shows a number of the reports are physically real, solid, flying objects operating in the atmosphere and witnessed by thousands of normal people. Some of the articles poke fun at the witnesses in the same manner as today. Other articles say that the witnesses actually met and spoke with the airship crews. St. Louis, Mo. newspapers devoted a considerable amount of space to airship reports.

The following articles are from the *ST. LOUIS STAR*.

DISTRESSFUL AIRSHIP

Oklahoma Adventists are in a Terror
Over the Airship

Norman, Okla., April 12: Adventists who are holding a series of protracted meetings here are highly wrought up over the report of an air ship seen near town. It had a glittering light and moved erratically. All manner of sinister prophecies are being made by the Adventists, until timid people are well nigh distracted.

IT'S AN OLD AIRSHIP

Delaware Farmers Saw it as
Early as Last January

Wilmington, Del., April 13: Since the mysterious airship has been reported from the West, a number of farmers here declare that they saw the same heavenly visitor over Delaware in January.

AGAIN VISIBLE

Mysterious Airship Seen Over Taylor Avenue.
It was traveling in an Easterly Direction.

St. Louis, Mo., April 14: The mysterious airship was again visible, Tuesday night, but it seemed to confine its maneuvers to that portion of the city lying west of Taylor Avenue, and between Delmar and St. Louis avenues. It was plainly visible from the Christian Brothers' College and the Sixth District Police Station. On Page avenue it seemed to be directly overhead, and was traveling West to East almost in a straight line. At Taylor avenue, two blocks from the car shed of the Lindell Railway, the mysterious object seemed to dart upwards, and

thick clouds quickly hid the light.

OTHER MICHIGAN REPORTS

Detroit, Mich., April 14: Reports from Coldwater, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Niles state that the airship was distinctly seen in the heavens last night. It was about a mile high, and floated a blazing white light in front and red and green lights at the sides.

VOICES IN THE SKY

More Details of the Airship in the
Heavens Over Buckeyedom

Dunkirk, O., April 16: The mysterious airship has passed here. It was seen in the eastern part of the town within 300 feet of the ground. Marshall Mahon and others heard passengers in the airship talking loudly. At Casston, O., farmer James McKenzie reports that the airship passed over his farm. He saw something white thrown from the vehicle. A party will leave here to search for the supposed message.

THAT AIRSHIP

Reputable Men About Bloomington, ILL., Have
Seen it

Bloomington, ILL., April 17: Reports of the mysterious airship were frequent last night. Telegraph operators at Rinken and Arrowsmith reported the ship sighted at 7:30 o'clock. A train crew saw the ship at Woodford, at 8:00 o'clock. A few minutes later an Illinois passenger train arrived, and it was reported that a number of the train crew saw the ship between Barnes and Marna. At Vincennes, Ind., more than a score of reputable men saw the airship early last night.

EDISON SKEPTICAL

Does Not Think the Airship Question has Been
Solved

New York, April 20: Thomas A. Edison does not think much of airships. He was seen in his West Orange laboratory in regard to a late account of the movement of the airship, according to which a letter was dropped from it on a farm near Astoria, Ill., with a copper enclosure and addressed to Edison and signed "C.L. Harris, Electrician Airship No. 3." He said: "You can take it from me that it is pure fiction. I have had several men named Harris in my employ, but I know nothing of C.L. Harris. I have no doubt that airships will be successfully constructed in the near future, but it will not be in the form of a balloon. It will be a mechanical contrivance, which will be raised by means of a powerful motor....."

THAT AIRSHIP

Postmaster at Greenfield, ILL.

Gets a Look at it

Greenfield, ILL., April 20: The much talked about airship made its appearance in this area yesterday afternoon, and is vouched for by several farmers residing east of this place; but M.G. Sisson, postmaster at this place, was the most favored spectator. He was out walking in the woods that line the banks of Taylor Creek, about three miles east of here. He had just started to return to the city when his dog, which accompanied him, ran to him and crouched at his feet in abject terror. Mr. Sisson tried to drive the dog away from him, but his efforts were futile. He then thought of the much talked about panther that had been seen in that vicinity about a year ago, and supposedly that it might be possible that it was still lurking around. Presently he heard a noise which seemed to come from above, and looking upward and to the northwest he beheld the airship approaching him. It was about 150 feet from the ground, but was not traveling very rapidly..... He was discovered by the people on board, and immediately the speed of the ship was increased and it rapidly rose to a great height. It passed about 100 feet above him, and by its close proximity he was enabled to get a very good view of it. It was about 100 feet in length and 15 feet in diameter, at its largest point. Its depth was probably 25 feet. It looked as if it was made of metal, and around its sides there was a walk or deck which was protected by a kind of railing or network.....

WAY OUT OF DATE

Milan, MO., Has Just Seen the
Wonderful Airship

MILAN, MO., April 24: The much-talked-about airship made its appearance in this city this week and was seen by a number of reputable people. Nothing was visible except an object which resembled the headlight of an engine. It seemed to come from the southwest until it got directly over the city; then it took a southeasterly course and soon disappeared.

The following articles are from the *ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH*:

AIRSHIP IN THE HEAVENS

Washington University Professors Puzzled
and Will Watch the Sky To-Night

ST. LOUIS, MO., April 10: Telescopes from Washington and St. Louis Universities will sweep the skies from zenith to horizon in a northwesterly

direction Saturday night and the professors at these institutions will endeavor to solve the mystery that is now puzzling the Central West. It is general belief that an air ship is floating over the states of Missouri, Illinois, Iowa and Kansas. This belief is entertained by men of scientific attainments as well as those not so well versed in the field of natural philosophy. The rumor that a strange aerial body had been seen became current a fortnight ago and was laughed at. It was repeated and wise men said the nocturnal observers were suffering from optical illusions due to excessive libations, or that the light from a brilliant star had been magnified by the imagination. Within the last three days the evidence that something unusual is moving midst the clouds has become so conclusive and has so much corroboration that the wisecracks have ceased to jibe, and while wondering what the mystery can be, they are doing their utmost to solve it.

Telegrams were received by the *POST-DISPATCH* Saturday morning from correspondents in four central states stating that a luminous body had been seen moving in a northwesterly direction Friday night. Different colored lights were seen flashing from the object, and its lines were easily distinguished. It was viewed by thousands at Chicago, and was declared by Max L. Hosmar, Secretary of the Chicago Aeronautical Association, to be an airship... Prof. Hough of Northwestern University said that it must have been a star that was seen, but thousands of Chicagoans ridicule the idea.

A *POST DISPATCH* reporter visited Union Station Saturday and interviewed train hands and passengers arriving from the West and Northwest. They all said the air-ship was the one topic of conversation in the region through which they passed. Hundreds have seen the object and all were mystified.

Visits were then paid Washington and St. Louis Universities. At the former, Prof. Henry S. Pritchett was found in the laboratory. "I know what you wish to speak about," he said when the reporter entered, "and I will frankly tell you I am as mystified as anyone. Can it be possible that it is an airship? Why, of course it can. ..." When asked about Prof. Hough's claim it was a star, he said: "That is not possible. In the first place Venus is the bright star at present and everybody knows Venus. She is not in that part of the heavens where the lights have been seen. It has been cloudy in those areas..., so the star must have been obscured, and that night it (the airship) was seen between the clouds and the Earth....."